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Three Presidential Visits To Proctor & Rutland 1891-1902



RUTLAND IN RETROSPECT

President Teddy Roosevelt, speaking in Rutland in September 1902, closed an era of presidential visits to Proctor and Rutland from 1891 to 1902. The Redfield Proctor welcome mat for presidents passed with Proctor's death in 1908.

About the Author

Mary H. Fregosi is a retired educator from Proctor and a member of the Rutland Historical Society who has written: "The Vermont Marble Company Strike of 1935-1936" (Vol. 32 No. 3), "A History of the Proctor Y.M.C.A. and the Sutherland Club" (Vol. 33 No. 1), "When the F.B.I. Came To Town: One of Vermont's Mysteries" (Vol. 38 No. 2), "Building the Proctor Marble Bridge: Conflict and Controversy" (Vol. 38 No. 3), "The Vermont Marble Company Stores (Vol. 40 No. 2), "The Vermont Marble Company Strike of 1966 (Vol. 42 No. 1) and "The Vermont Marble Company Goes To War" (Vol. 42 No. 2. Mary is a Proctor native who has also written a history of the Proctor-Pittsford Country Club and a history of Proctor High School boys' basketball.

Introduction

From 5 March 1889 to 5 November 1891 Redfield Proctor was Secretary of War in President Harrison's cabinet. From 1891 to his death in 1908, Proctor was the U.S. Senator from Vermont.

These prestigious roles in Washington D.C. enabled Proctor to bring three sitting presidents to the Proctor and Rutland area for brief visits. In Proctor Redfield's dominant influence in the Vermont Marble Company guaranteed a gala community event highlighted by a very impressive decoration of the Redfield Proctor home.

As these presidents traveled by train, their exit from Proctor invariably meant a stop in Rutland City where they were met with the usual crowds and fanfare.

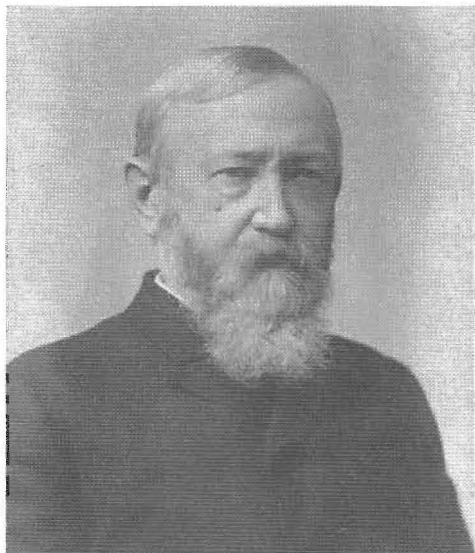
This Quarterly with its vivid descriptions and photos is devoted to the period from 1891 to 1902 when American presidents could be seen and heard in person in Proctor and Rutland. Upon Redfield Proctor's death on 4 March 1908, this era of presidential contact with Proctor and Rutland ended.

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Three Presidential Visits To Proctor & Rutland 1891-1902

By Mary Fregosi

Benjamin Harrison, August 1891



The *Rutland Daily Herald* was tracking the presidential party as it made its way through Vermont. When subscribers read that Benjamin Harrison had left St. Johnsbury where he had been the guest of Franklin Fairbanks, readers knew they would soon be receiving the fifty-eight year old President. Finally, the day arrived: August 27, 1891.

It was a cloudy day and the ground was muddy and wet but spirits were not deterred as anticipation of Harrison's arrival approached. Rutland village presi-

dent H. O. Carpenter, ex-judge James Barrett, Percival W. Clement and Dr. J. D. Hanrahan went to Bellows Falls to accompany the presidential party to the city. At Rutland, Secretary of War Redfield Proctor, Howard Cale, Fletcher D. Proctor, Frank C. Partridge, Col. George T. Childs, and Gen. Gillmore met the train there and traveled on to Proctor with the President.¹

Awaiting the President in Proctor were some 1,000 people who, according to a *Herald* reporter, "cheered themselves hoarse". There followed a twenty-one gun salute after which the Proctor band played "Hail to the Chief". Then a tired President was escorted to an open carriage and was driven up a road lined by Chinese lanterns. As the carriage reached the crest of the hill the party saw a huge illuminated "Welcome" sign above the covered bridge. Locomotive headlights lit up

¹ *Rutland Daily Herald*, "The President's Visit", 28 August 1891, p.4.

Redfield Proctor's house and grounds. Mrs. Proctor and family received the President who retired for the evening shortly afterward.²

The events scheduled for Friday, August 28th would only contribute to the fatigue of the President. His day began shortly after breakfast with a visit to a quarry. Then he and Redfield toured some of the Vermont Marble Company mills.³

Meanwhile, Rutlanders were assembling in front of Memorial Hall in Rutland to view the President and hear his speech. Harrison's train arrived shortly before noon at the Chaffee crossing where he and his party were met by a reception committee of prominent citizens: Col. Joel C. Baker, H. H. Dyer, William G. Veazey, ex-judge Barrett, J. W. Cramton, Dr. Hanrahan, C. H. Joyce, J. N. Woodfin, E. P. Gilson, P. W. Clement, George E. Lawrence, Henry F. Field, John N. Baxter, P. M. Meldon, and John A. Sheldon.⁴

From there carriages drove the party through State St. to Grove St., on to Merchants' Row and up to Washington St., then over to Main St. and down Center St. to Merchants' Row and on to Memorial Hall. A cornet band, the Kingsley Guard, the Rochester Drum Corps and the Grand Army post picked up the group at the Bates House and provided an impressive escort to the Hall.⁵

Harrison entered the building and after a short rest, appeared before the crowd of approximately 5,000 people. A canopy of a large flag had been placed over the Hall entrance that served as a shelter for the President. The entire building was decorated in red, white, and blue and large flags were over each door.⁶

Col. Baker introduced the President to the crowd. In part he remarked that a "chief magistrate of a great people can journey from one end of his domain to the other with no protection except the loyalty and love of the people over which he rules...We greet you, Mr. President, upon the occasion as our chief magistrate; we honor you as a brave soldier and as a man among men, and assure you that our welcome comes from the heart."⁷

² *Rutland Daily Herald*, "Clouded Skies", 28 August 1891, p.1.

³ *Rutland Daily Herald*, "The President", 29 August 1891, p.4.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Rutland Daily Herald*, "The President Welcomed Yesterday-Rutland", 29 August, 1891, p.4.

Harrison began his talk by acknowledging how tired he was. He mentioned how pleased he was to be at Memorial Hall, "erected as a place of deposit for trophies of the great civil war and as a monument of honor to those soldiers from Vermont who aided so conspicuously in making that war successful."⁸

At the conclusion of the President's speech the Rev. Dr. Seaver presented him with an oil painting of Rutland and the mountains to the east with Killington Peak in the background. The artist was a Mrs. Belcher of Pittsford. This was a gift for Mrs. Harrison who did not accompany her husband on the trip. Due to the President's tired state there was no general reception. He went into the Hall where he socialized with some invited guests, then entered P. W. Clement's private carriage and was taken to Clement's home for a luncheon. Also present at this affair were Redfield Proctor, Halford, Cale, Col. Veazey, Charles Clement, Col. Baker, State treasurer Field, Col. Horton, H. H. Baxter, H. O. Carpenter, F. D. Proctor, and Ambrose L. Upson. After lunch and conversation the President left for Proctor's home where he had an opportunity to take a short nap before dinner.⁹

All of Proctor had been invited to the Friday evening program. Handbills had been circulated throughout the village and town in advance of Harrison's arrival. "Everybody invited to welcome President Harrison, Friday evening, August 28, 1891. The torch-light procession will form north of Vermont Marble Company's office at 7:30 o'clock. Reception at Governor Proctor's grounds at 8:30. Everyone asked to illuminate their residences and make the town as attractive as possible. Let us give him a genuine Vermont welcome."¹⁰

The residents of Proctor responded. A reporter for the *Herald* noted that houses, schools, village buildings and the library were "festooned with buntings and flags."¹¹ From Redfield's house to the road was a string of colored lanterns and on Fletcher D. Proctor's house there were candles and lanterns from the top to the bottom. In addition, there was a row of lanterns on both sides of his driveway from the street to the house. E. R. Morse, the treasurer of the Vermont Marble Company, lived on a prominent hill in the village. His house was similarly deco-

⁸ *Ibid.*

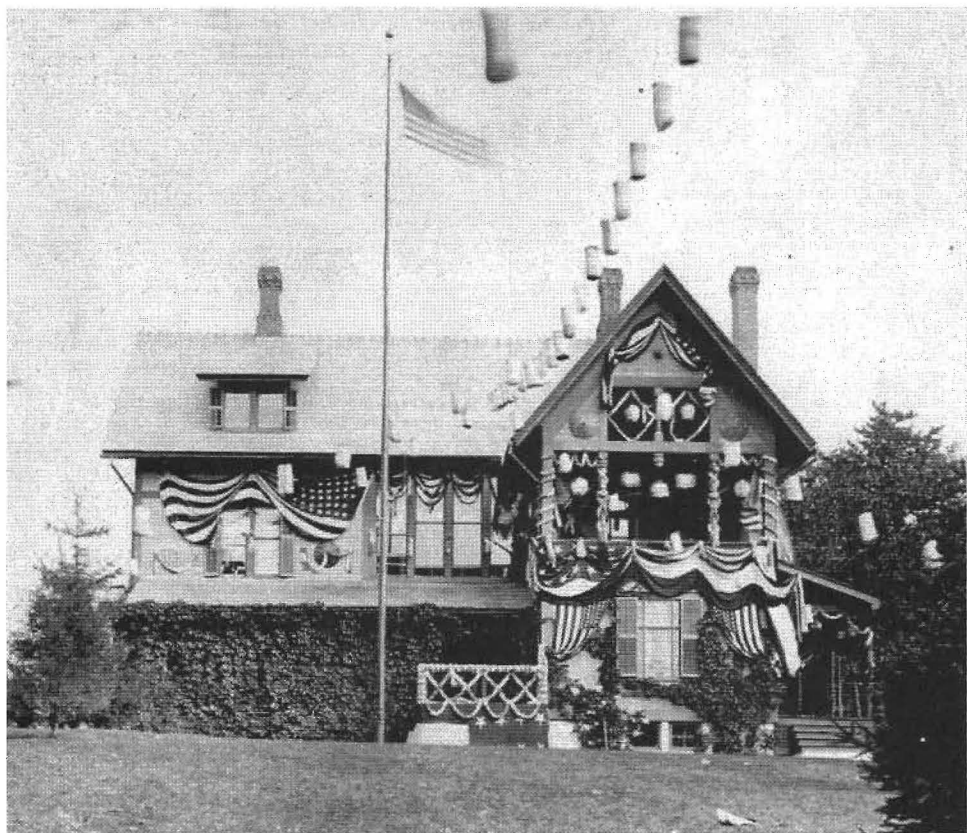
⁹ *Ibid.* p.3.

¹⁰ David C. Gale, *Proctor: The Story of a Marble Town* (Brattleboro: The Vermont Printing Company, 1922, p.234.

¹¹ *Rutland Daily Herald*, "Proctor Ablaze", 29 August, 1891, p.3.

rated and Chinese lanterns hung on a wire stretching from his house to the Union Church.¹² One observer remarked that the Church resembled a Moorish palace.¹³ It was reported that 9,000 lanterns were used in the decorations.¹⁴

As planned, a procession formed near the Company office with the Proctor Cornet Band and a float of young ladies dressed in white and singing patriotic songs. The route took the group through North St. to High St., on to Pine St. and Church St. to Redfield's house.



The Redfield Proctor House decorated for the visit of President Harrison.

¹² Otto T. Johnson, *History of Proctor, Vermont* (Montpelier: Vermont Historical Society, 1991), p.417.

¹³ *Rutland Daily Herald*, "The President", 29 August, 1891, p.3.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

At 8:00 p.m. rafts, loaded with wood and pitch and moored in the Otter Creek, were set on fire while a huge fire was started on West Mountain. Throughout the town 25 bonfires on twenty-foot standards were lit. From a large raft to the south of the covered bridge rockets and fireworks exploded into the night air. A Herald reporter noted that the display "rivalled in splendor the magnificent scenes seen at St. Albans and St. Johnsbury."¹⁵

Redfield introduced the President to the crowd of a thousand. Harrison began his remarks by praising his host, noting the respect he had among other members of his cabinet as well as those of either party and for his invaluable contributions. He alluded to his Secretary of War's impending bid for the vacant U.S. Senate seat and his regret at the prospect of losing him. Referring to the Town of Proctor as the best type of American neighborhood, he complimented the crowd on "comfortable conditions" under which they lived and worked and contrasted these with conditions of those who labored and lived in urban areas. He again praised Redfield for creating the ideal relationship between employer and employee. In addition, he mentioned the work being done to promote foreign trade and the opening of new markets.¹⁶

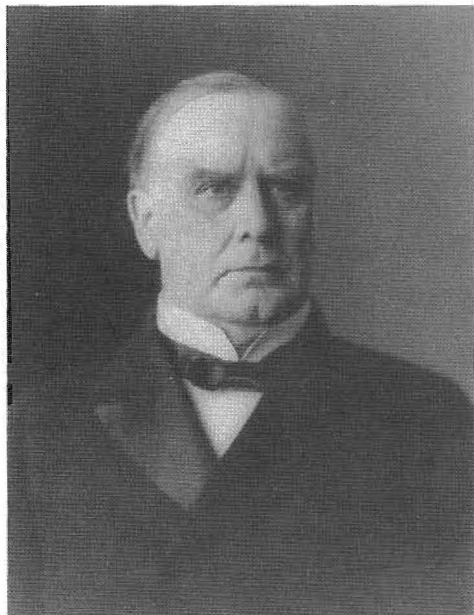
When he had concluded his speech, the crowd threw up three cheers and the band struck up "Hail to the Chief" as a shower of rockets once again filled the night sky. Around 10:15 p.m., accompanied by Redfield, President Harrison boarded his train for Rutland where his cars were attached to the regular express train which reached New York City early the following morning. From there, Proctor went on to Washington while Harrison proceeded to the summer White House at Cape May. He had left there on August 18th. During his eleven-day excursion President Harrison had delivered thirty-seven speeches. This left little wonder as to why the President had been fatigued toward the end of his trip.¹⁷

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

William McKinley, August 1897



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Six years later residents of Proctor and Rutland would once again have the pleasure of a presidential visit. President William McKinley had been staying at the Hotel Champlain at Bluff Point and on August 12th, 1897, his party of sixteen went by private yacht to Burlington. There McKinley was met by Senator Redfield Proctor and P. W. Clement who had a special train waiting to bring the party to Proctor.¹⁸ Traveling with the President were Vice President Garret Hobart and his wife and Secretary of War Russell Alger and his wife. Mr. Depew's private car, *100*, and the Wagner car, *Idler*, made up

the train drawn by the locomotive, *Charles Clement*.¹⁹

Former Governor Urban A. Woodbury joined the party along with Mrs. Clement. McKinley got a "hearty send-off" in the Queen City. As the special made its way south individuals and small groups patiently waited for the passing train in the hopes of getting a glimpse of the President. Prior to its arrival in Proctor there were stops in Middlebury where 200 cheered McKinley and in Brandon. As the train approached the station in Proctor every window in the shops was full of faces hoping to catch a glimpse of the event while "most of the Town waited at the depot."²⁰ Carriages were ready to take the President to Senator Proctor's home. Vice President Hobart and his wife continued on to Rutland where they were the guests of P. W. Clement for dinner.²¹

That evening the residents of Proctor and an additional number estimated at 400 turned out for the activities planned at Senator Proctor's house. His house and the shrubbery surrounding it were decorated with

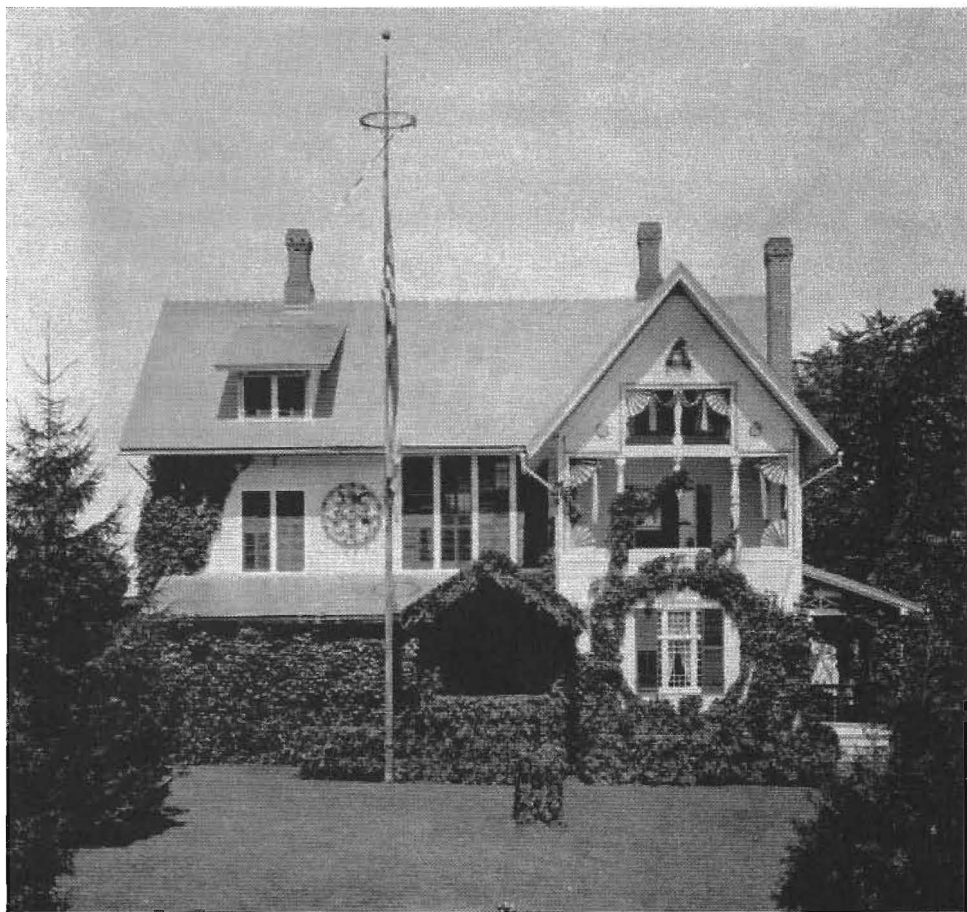
¹⁸ *Rutland Weekly Herald*, "McKinley's Visit", 19 August, 1897, p.3.

¹⁹ *Rutland Daily Herald*, "The President's Itinerary", 11 August, 1897, p.3.

²⁰ *Rutland Weekly Herald*, "McKinley's Visit", 19 August, 1897, p.3.

²¹ *Ibid.*

red, white, and blue lanterns. The flag pole was encompassed by a circle of lights.²² Trout taken from Beaver Pond swam in a temporary fountain in the middle of the lawn. A speaker's stand, decorated with streamers was at the front of the house and a wheel set with colored lights played against the house.²³ In describing the scene a *Herald* reporter said: "The American flag attached to a pole surmounted by a circle of electric lights posed in patriotic attitude in the still night air and every arch, cornice and line of the house was so accentuated by electricity that the moon overhead seemed to shed a dim apology for living." To add to the festive occasion the Proctor Band was on hand to play operatic and patriotic selections.²⁴



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Redfield Proctor House decorated for visit of President McKinley.

²² *Rutland Weekly Herald*, "McKinley's Visit", 19 August, 1897, p.3.

²³ Otto T. Johnson, p.422.

²⁴ *Rutland Weekly Herald*, "McKinley's Visit", 19 August, 1897, p.3.

Senator Proctor introduced the President whose brief comments referred to his previous visit five years earlier, his satisfaction in seeing so many children at the reception, and the virtues of family life. Three cheers rose up from the crowd at the conclusion of his remarks.²⁵

Then Senator Proctor introduced General Alger who stated he was pleased to be in Vermont for many reasons, one of which was his wife was a native and another because he had served with the 1st Vermont Calvary during the Civil War. He remarked that Vermont troops were among the best in the army. In addition, he told the crowd of the respect that Senator Proctor had earned on the national level. When he finished, he too received the cheers of the assemblage. He then introduced the President's wife and ex-Governor Ormsbee who, in turn, introduced Mrs. Alger to the crowd.²⁶

Present that evening were General Russell Hastings of Ohio who had served in McKinley's regiment and prominent locals including: George T. Chaffee, J. N. Woodfin, G. R. Bottum, Dr. C. S. Caverly, and W. R. Page. That evening the President and Mrs. McKinley stayed at Senator Proctor's home while General Alger and his wife were guests of Fletcher Proctor.²⁷

On the morning of the 13th of August it was off to Rutland. Plans had originally called for the party to go by carriage but in the interest of saving time, the party took a train. The Rutland reception committee was comprised of Chairman Gen. Levi G. Kingsley, Alderman N. S. Stearns, J. W. Cramton, G. T. Chaffee, John N. Woodfin, G. E. Royce, and B. F. Pollard. This group had met with the city council and the mayor and had drawn up a list of streets that the Presidential route would take. Residents on this route were advised to decorate their homes.²⁸

McKinley was particularly popular in a state that was heavily Republican but the *Herald* commented that "there is a personal leaning toward Mr. McKinley in this state which is altogether exceptional." He noted that many Vermont Democrats had voted for McKinley rather

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Rutland Daily Herald*, "President McKinley's Visit", 12 August, 1897, p.4.

than Bryan and that "all men are McKinley men today."²⁹

The President's train stopped at the West Street crossing where carriages were waiting to take them on the selected route. The President and the mayor were in the first carriage; General Kingsley, ex-Governor Woodbury, and Senator Proctor in the second; Cramton, C. M. Wilds of Middlebury and Pollard in the third; Chaffee and guests in the fourth; and H. O. Carpenter, George R. Bottum, Henry F. Field, and H. A. Sawyer in the fifth.³⁰

The original route was abbreviated, probably due to time constraints. The group went from West St. up to Washington St., then to Pleasant St. and on to Madison. From Madison the group proceeded to Main St., down Crescent St. to Grove St. and back to West St. to Wales St. and then down Center St. to the depot.³¹

A large crowd awaited the President at the station. He appeared on the platform but did not speak. Vice President Hobart, Senator Proctor, and General Alger each made a few remarks. Many got to shake the President's hand and the crowd got to see Mrs. McKinley who also was on the platform. Then the party entered the train bound for Chester where McKinley had been invited to review the annual muster of the militia at Camp Governor Grout.³²

²⁹ *Rutland Daily Herald*, "The President and Vermont", 13 August, 1897, p.4.

³⁰ *Rutland Daily Herald*, "McKinley in Rutland", 14 August, 1897, p.4.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

Theodore Roosevelt, September, 1902



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Five years later handbills appeared around Proctor announcing the arrival of yet another President. "President Roosevelt will arrive at Proctor at 11:50 a.m., and remain until 12:20 p.m. He will speak to the people from the piazza of Senator Proctor's house. The Proctor Band will give a concert on the lawn before the arrival of the presidential party. A special train for Rutland will leave Proctor at 12:30, immediately after the departure of the President."³³

Roosevelt visited Proctor and Rutland on Labor Day, September 1st, 1902. Since it was a holiday the events drew large crowds despite the hot day. Roosevelt's itinerary that day began in Burlington and ended in Northfield, Massachusetts. There were planned stops at Vergennes, Middlebury, Brandon, Proctor, Rutland, Ludlow, Bellows Falls, Chester, and Brattleboro.³⁴

That morning Roosevelt left Shelburne Farms where he had been the guest of Dr. and Mrs. W. S. Webb and went to Burlington where he was driven about the city. Arriving at the train station he was joined by several newspaper reporters and his party. The group climbed aboard a special train that consisted of Roosevelt's private coach, the *Mayflower*, a dining car, baggage car, working coach, and two Pullman sleepers for the reporters. Several secret service officers were on board as well as a detective, a half dozen porters, and messengers.³⁵

Roosevelt's first stop was at Vergennes where he gave a short speech and then it was on to Middlebury. There he delivered a fifteen minute talk to a crowd of 1,000.³⁶

³³ Gale, p.238.

³⁴ *Rutland Daily Herald*, "Roosevelt-Concludes His Tour of Vermont", 2 September, 1902, p.1.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

Even though Roosevelt would be spending a short time at Proctor the town had taken great pains to make a good impression. A *New York Commercial* reporter observed that the end of the covered bridge the President would see had been given a white wash for the visit. The railway station had been painted for the first time since its roof had been raised. A hemlock hedge literally appeared overnight to block an ugly fence along the short parade route.³⁷ The company store, library, and other buildings were covered with the national colors.



The railway station on the left and the company store in the right rear were only part of the community that was decorated.

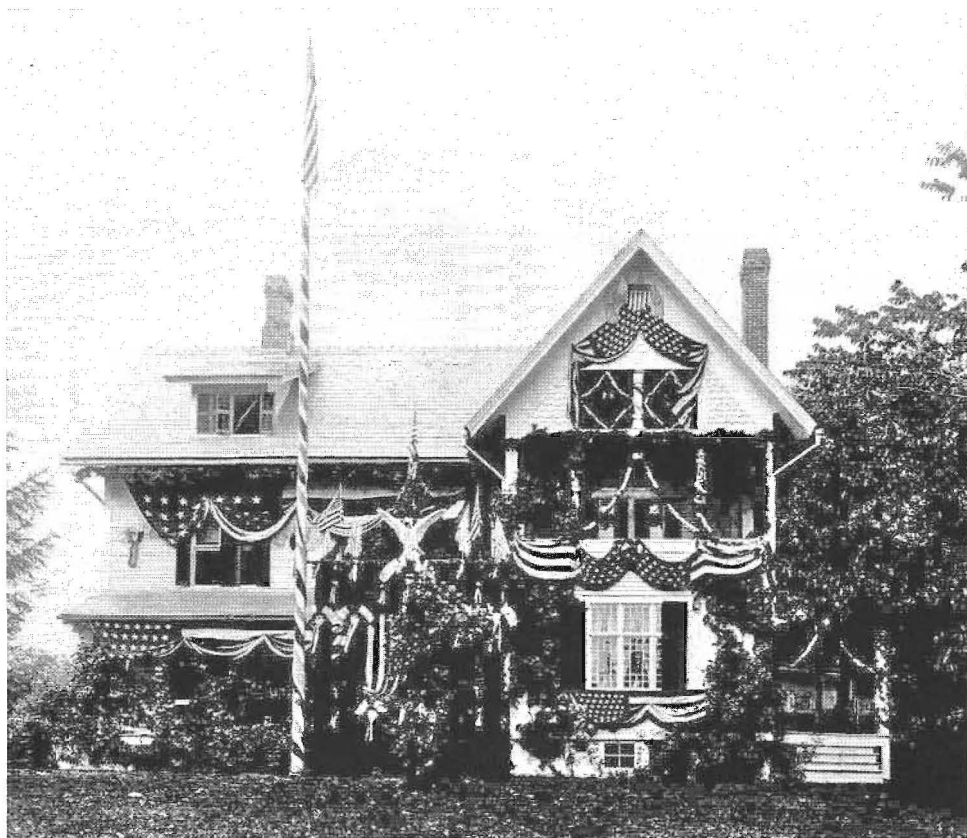
Senator Proctor's house was once again festooned in the national colors. On top of the canopy was a plaster cast of an American Eagle and niches of the house were decorated with the national emblem. The flag pole once again did not escape the decorator's hand.³⁸

A few days prior to his visit posters had been distributed around the town requesting children to meet at their schools and to bring golden rod with them. That morning children formed in lines and marched to Senator Proctor's.

³⁷ Gale, p.238.

³⁸ Johnson, p.424.

By the time the train arrived there was a crowd estimated at 2,500 awaiting the President. The Proctor Band, positioned on the Senator's balcony also was ready for Teddy.³⁹

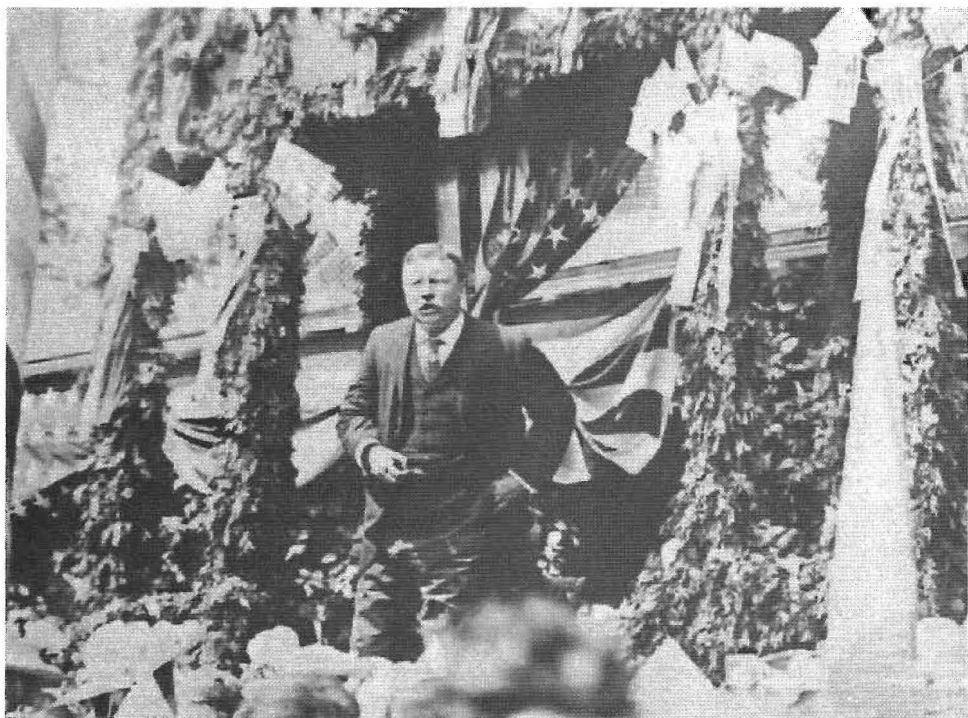


*Redfield Proctor house decorated for the visit of
President Teddy Roosevelt.*

Senator Proctor and the Presidential party and other honored guests climbed onto the temporary platform erected in front of his house. Proctor, perhaps sensing his own mortality, introduced the President to the crowd: "Neighbors and Friends, for the third time the President of the United States honors us with his presence and will speak from this platform. I do not expect to have the honor and pleasure of introducing another President, but I do expect to have the pleasure of introducing this man again when he serves his second term."⁴⁰

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* Proctor would die in 1908.



President Teddy Roosevelt speaking in Proctor in 1902.

Roosevelt indicated how pleased he was to be at the “home of my old and valued friend”. He extolled the benefits of living in small towns and cities where each man has the opportunity to keep “in close touch with his government.” Then he noted that “while the town government can do something for him, he can do more for it...”⁴¹ He also spoke of the necessity of enacting good laws and the necessity of good administration of those laws while emphasizing the duties that needed to be performed at local, state, national, and international levels. His remarks also touched on the Monroe Doctrine and what would become known as the Corollary to that doctrine. He asserted that the doctrine was not one of aggression, rather one of peace and of defense that needed to be backed up by a first class navy.⁴²

True to his “speaking softly but carrying a big stick” philosophy, Roosevelt concluded that “our attitude toward other powers must be one of

⁴¹ *Ibid.* p.425.

⁴² *Rutland Daily Herald*, “Roosevelt-Concludes His Tour of Vermont”, 2 September, 1902, p.1.

dignity, courtesy, and respect, which we intend that they shall show us in return. We must be willing to give them the regard that we exact from them. We must do no wrong and we must submit to no wrong doing from them, but when we take a position let us remember that our holding it depends upon ourselves.”⁴³



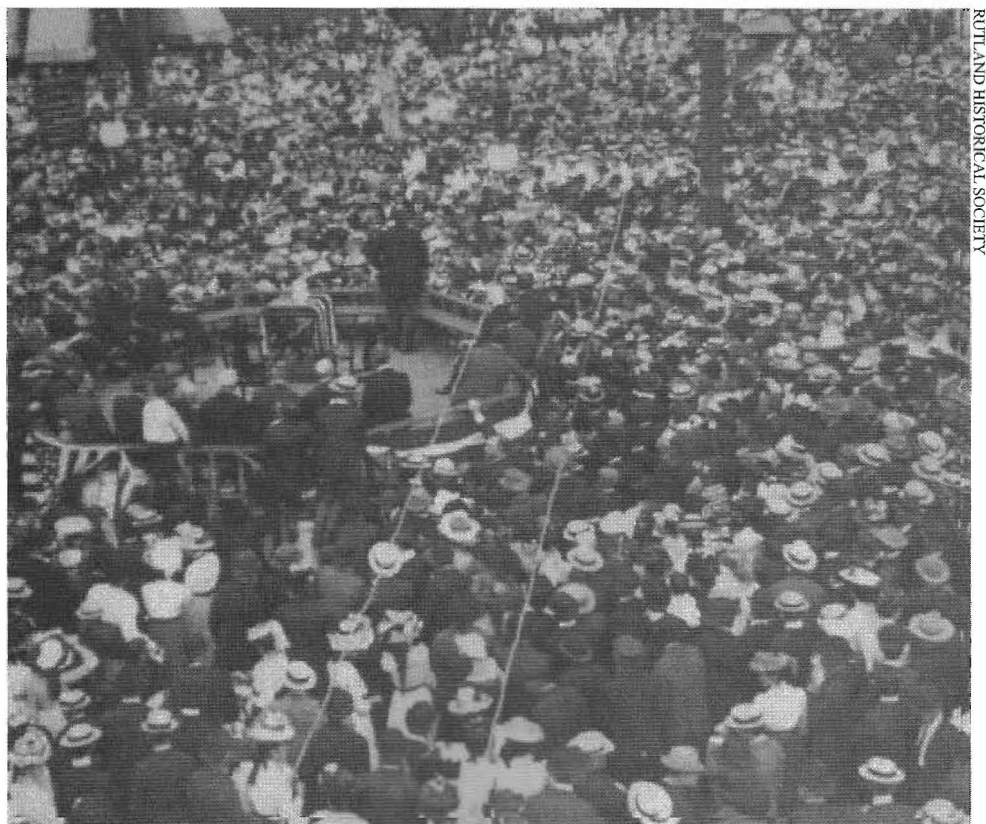
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President Teddy Roosevelt concludes his speech in Proctor in 1902.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

Having received the applause of the crowd, he was immediately driven to the station where he boarded his train for Rutland. The Town of Proctor, in the sixteenth year of its founding, had received yet another President.

Many residents of Proctor followed Roosevelt on a special train that left the town ten minutes after the President's departure. Waiting for the President in Rutland was a massive crowd, due in large part to the Labor Day holiday.



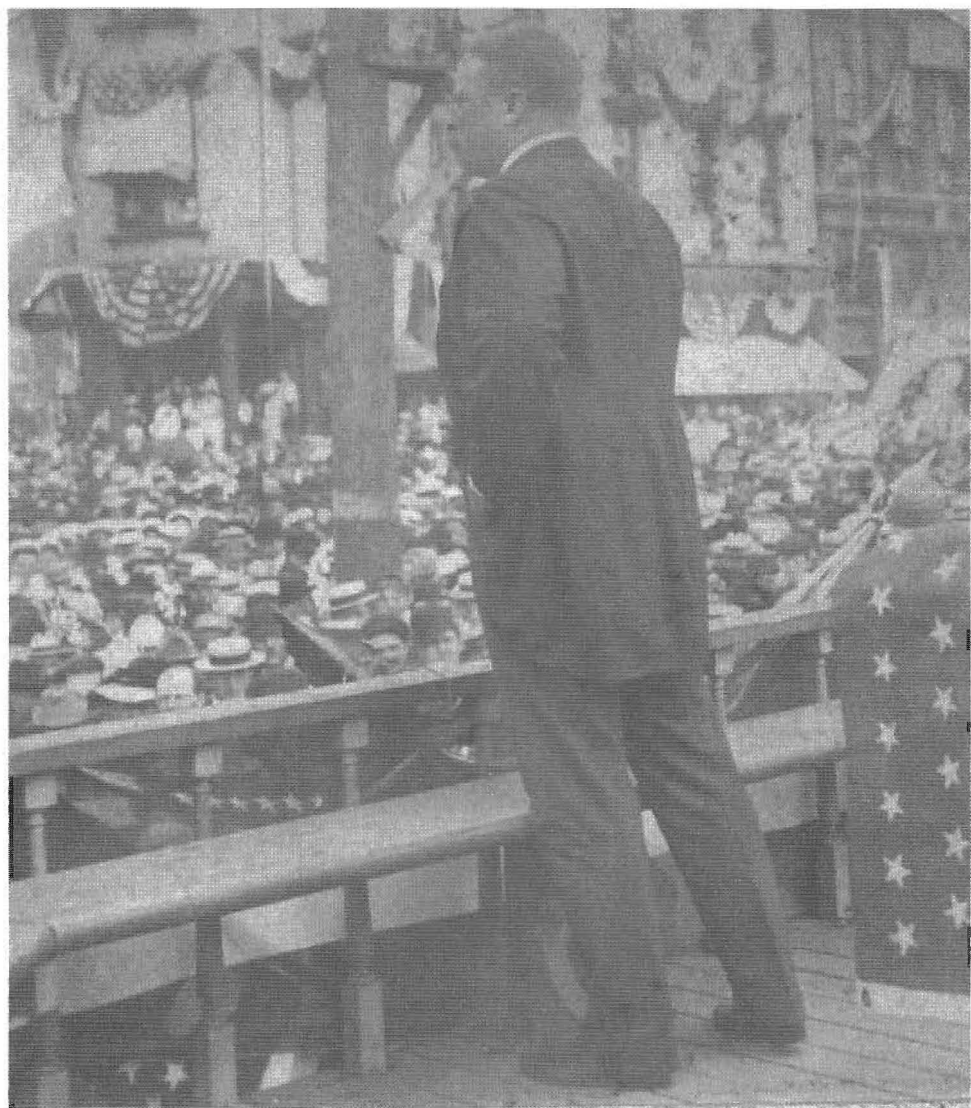
ROUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A crowd estimated to be 8,000 listened to President Teddy Roosevelt address them in Depot Park in 1902.

The business section of the city was decorated in red, white, and blue and the bandstand was draped with American flags. Roberts Post of the Grand Army of the Republic occupied a place of honor in the park while Company A of the Vermont National Guard guarded the President's path from the depot platform to the bandstand.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

Mayor David L. Temple and Carl B. Hinsman, president of the board of aldermen, escorted the President. Gen. Edward H. Ripley had the distinct honor of introducing Roosevelt.



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President Teddy Roosevelt captivated his Rutland audience in September 1902 with his emphasis on the dignity of labor and the duties of citizenship.

It was reported that during the twenty-five minute stop Roosevelt spent twenty-two minutes giving a speech. A *Herald* reporter wrote that "No president of the United States was ever given a greater reception in Rutland than President Roosevelt was yesterday" and that he "completely captivated the crowd with a straightforward and forceful speech on the dignity of labor and the duties of American citizenship." He averred that each had to pull his own weight and it was not the job the man held but the spirit under which he took it that counted.⁴⁵

He concluded his remarks by admonishing the crowd to "never forget that the fundamental truth in American citizenship is that each man is entitled in the last resort to be judged solely on his worth as a man."⁴⁶ Gen. Ripley promptly came forward and called for three cheers. The President then proceeded to the train where he received more cheers as the train rolled out of the station.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ *Rutland Daily Herald*, "Rutland's Welcome", 2 September, 1902, p.2.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p.1.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p.2.



Redfield Proctor offered a decorative Proctor welcome to the visiting presidents of his era.